

Promising Practice: Nursing Career Pathways

Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board

CareerWorks Healthcare Training Institute

Associate degree nurses in Wisconsin have indicated that cost and time are the greatest barriers to advancement in their nursing careers. Undertaking additional debt to finance education places financial hardships on families and demanding work schedules make it difficult to find time to study. The current average time for nursing students to complete education for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree is six years, but the incumbent nursing workforce needs more education to provide quality care in an increasingly complex healthcare environment. There is also a great need for increased diversity in the Wisconsin nursing workforce.

The Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board (MAWIB) is striving to address these challenges through CareerWorks Healthcare Training Institute, its Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program, funded by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance. Partnering with the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee (UWM) and Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC), MAWIB is working to develop an accelerated nursing program and to build nursing career pathways. This effort will help HPOG participants who are nurses or nursing students complete degrees and fill the nursing workforce gap currently facing local employers. The partnership has set the following primary goals:

1. Increase the number of associate degree nurse students of the Wisconsin Technical College System and incumbent associate degree nurses who enroll for the Registered Nurse (RN) to BSN program, and shorten their time to completion of the BSN.
2. Identify and remove barriers to enrollment and accelerated completion of RN to BSN degrees in Wisconsin.
3. Investigate the option for a self-paced, competency-based curriculum for students.

The goal of the partnership is to develop career pathways to make nursing training programs as streamlined and convenient for students as possible. Program recruitment will be coordinated through all educational partners. Prerequisite courses will be provided at more frequent times and locations so students will not be stuck if they miss or fail a class.

The project plans to establish methods for dual enrollment of MATC nursing students at UWM, and it will ensure the transferability of credits between the educational institutions. To increase access and convenience for program completion, courses will have options for on-line instruction or off-campus, employer-based courses. The program is working with employers so that students can incorporate training into their work schedules in a constructive way. These efforts will serve CareerWorks Healthcare Training Institute students while building relationships that will have long-term benefits for local healthcare students and employers.

Promising Practice: Employer Coaches

Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board

The Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board, Inc. (MAWIB) is committed to providing TANF and other low-income incumbent workers in the healthcare industry with the continuous and relevant training, personal and career supports, and motivation and guidance to pursue career opportunities in healthcare. Through its HPOG program, MAWIB partnered with the Milwaukee Area Healthcare Alliance (MAHA) to create the CareerWorks Healthcare Training Institute (HTI), a one-stop training and education center for people seeking work in the healthcare field.

A challenge facing many HPOG participants is that their first, entry-level healthcare jobs may not provide family-sustaining wages. However, these jobs do place them in career pathways leading to better opportunities. It is essential that participants receive continuous coaching to give them information and encouragement and to identify training that will provide the skills and certifications necessary for advancement and higher wages in healthcare careers.

To provide this essential support, MAWIB expanded the HTI's partnerships with key local employers to establish employer coaches. These coaches help qualified and motivated workers succeed and advance on a healthcare career ladder while helping employers build a sustainable talent pipeline to meet their workforce needs.

Employer coaches collaborate with the HTI director and staff to identify needs and provide all appropriate and relevant services for incumbent workers who enroll and become active participants in the HTI programs and services. Employer coaches are often human resources or other healthcare supervisory or management employees. MAWIB compensates the employer for the time coaches spend on HTI activities with participants as specified in formal agreements.

In collaboration with MAWIB and CareerWorks HTI, employer coaches work with, and on the behalf of, incumbent workers who are enrolled participants in CareerWorks HTI. Specific activities of the employer coach include:

- Acquire knowledge of HTI programs and services.
- Conduct individual and group coaching sessions for incumbent worker program participants.
- Coordinate career transition training designed to help participants develop a career advancement strategy.
- Refer and assist participants in the support services application process.
- Communicate with the HTI management team regarding any concerns that may impact a participant's progress toward stated career goals.

The employer is a registered user of the HPOG Performance Reporting System (PRS) and enters HTI participant activities, outputs, and outcomes based on uniform data collection guidelines for monitoring program performance. Employer coaches provide HTI coach staff with updated progress reports and copies of relevant documentation and other forms for participant files maintained at the CareerWorks HTI. MAWIB provides the employer coach with initial user training, manuals, and guidelines to enter participant data into the required data reporting systems and insures each coach receives ongoing and continuous system support, service, and technical assistance.